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THE MANUFACTURE OF SEVRES.—III.

Translated from the French of Edward Garnier, by Louise C. Mariotte.



VASE BIJOUX, BY M. GELY.

THE painted decoration which was formerly exclusively employed, seems to have been almost entirely put aside, and Porcelaine Dure offers to us but little of that kind; only one vase (No. 10, Sleep), painted by Mme. Apoil, the artist to whose versatile and distinguished talent Sèvres owes so many remarkable works. While highly recognizing in this beautiful vase the fine qualities of composition and drawing which characterizes the talent of Mme. Apoil, and which make of this piece one of the choicest of the Sèvres exhibition, it is to be regretted that the decoration was executed on Porcelaine Dure; the difference in glazing which exists between the painted part and the part left white is so perceptible that the decorative motives seem to be glued to the porcelain.

The applied pastes appear also to have been abandoned, though not perhaps wisely. The colors thus employed have certainly not the brilliancy or transparency of the enamels or of the colors imposed upon the pure surface of Porcelaine Tendre, but they offer nevertheless resources that, in many cases, it would be foolish to disregard. We only need as examples the delicate little coffee service (No. 13), decorated with insects on a vermiculated ground, executed by Charles Ficquenet, recently deceased, also the two vases (No. 8), decorated with chrysanthemums and foliage, last work of Mme. Escallier, who possessed in so high a degree the correct sentiment of decoration.

Of Porcelaine Nouvelle, which occupied the most important place at the Exposition, we will mention particularly the very remarkable series of porcelains called Flammé, which were so justly admired when displayed for the first time at the Exposition of Decorative Arts in 1884.

The admirable Chinese porcelains, with intense colorings, reproducing all the varieties of red mixed with blue, violet lilac or yellow tones, the great brilliancy of which recalls that of the hardest stones or most precious marbles, have been well known for a long time; through the analyses and experiments of Salvétat it was learned that these wonderful colorings were produced from copper, but although greatly admired the idea never suggested itself to anyone to imitate them. Deck, the first to penetrate the secrets of Oriental porcelain, set himself resolutely to work, in 1868, to solve the problem, and obtained almost immediately satisfactory results. It was only however in 1880, that he showed, for the first time, that complete series of small vases which was one of the great attractions of his exposition. His example was followed by several ceramists. among others—M. M. Optat Milet of Sèvres, and Boulenger of Choisy-le-Roi, who likewise attained satisfactory results. M. Lauth, appointed dirctor of the Sèvres manufactory, tried, in his turn; in 1882 the production of the Flammé on some more important pieces, and soon succeeded in almost equalling the most beautiful porcelains of that kind which China had produced. We ought to say, however, that the Flammé porcelains exhibited by M. Chaplet, of Choisy-le-Roi, seem to us superior to those of Sèvres. They are larger, their paste is harder, which having been fired at a higher temperature, gives them a more solid and durable appearance.

The busts, groups, and statuettes displayed displayed were also executed in biscuit of Porcelaine Nouvslle. Several of these are reproductions of works of the last century, chief among them is the group of pea fowls, certainly a work of very fine order, the conception of which does great honor to M. Cain, the skilful sculptor; but the execution in porcelain appears to be an attempt without sufficient range or capacity, and one that it would be useless to recommence. The biscuit of porcelain is, in fact, really the negation of ceramic art, the leading quality of which is brilliancy of color. To endeavor, as Bronguiart had desired, to substitute the porcelain biscuit for marble seems to us a grave error. Marble has qualities of softness and transparency that the biscuit does not possess, it being a hard material compressed into a mould and the particles made still more contracted by baking; a true artist can give some life to marble and leave upon it the imprint of his genius, but the biscuit, whatever masterpiece it may produce remains always cold and lifeless. We will also add that there is no advantage in this substitution and we believe, to be right, when we say that the government would in the end, find economy to have this group of pea-fowls, which it appears is intended to adorn the vestibule of the Palais de l' Élysee—executed in marble. As to the tour de force of the manufacture it does not exist, this group being formed of several pieces united together, and the joining carefully concealed by a preparation of fine cement.

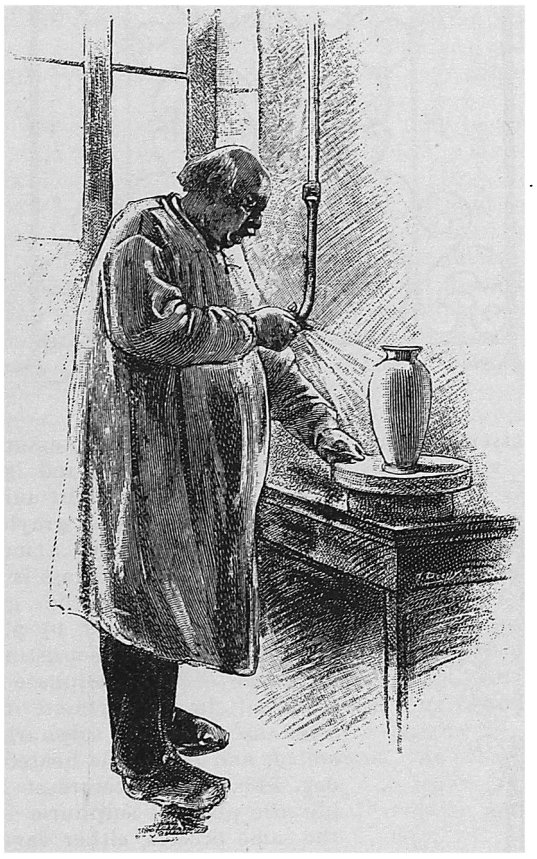


ENAMELLING ROOM.

We shall speak of the candelabrum (No. 330) only to praise the enamelled pedestal, truly beautiful in all respects, of which the subjects Winter and Summer composed and engraved by M. Gobert, are charming and graceful. As to the figures in biscuit, it is to be regretted that they were made to bear those unsightly blue and gold cornucopias, the tone and material of which remind us of the lozenges, which in our childhood, were the great charm of the Savoy biscuits exposed for sale on the holidays. The catalogue informs us that this is a Sèvres prize, but we feel sure that the members who compose the Committee on Improvement did not take into consideration the effect, that the design which was submitted to their judgment, would produce when executed; we have no doubt that they now regret their error.

While we are speaking of the Sèvres prize let us say that we are somewhat surprised, that there has not been put up for competition, a design for table service. It is at least thirty years that the manufactory has executed the same service designed by Peyre; we are certainly far from denying the purity of line and

elegance of some of the pieces which compose it, but think that it is indeed quite time to produce something new. Private trade, after having reproduced the Peyre service which was openly sold as Sèvres service, has been obliged, in order to gratify public taste, to invent new designs, some of which striving after originality are absolutely bad. Would it not be responding to the purpose intended, in instituting the Sèvres prize, to propose as object for the next competition, a new design for a complete table service? Competitors certainly would not be wanting and private shops could manufacture on their own account, from

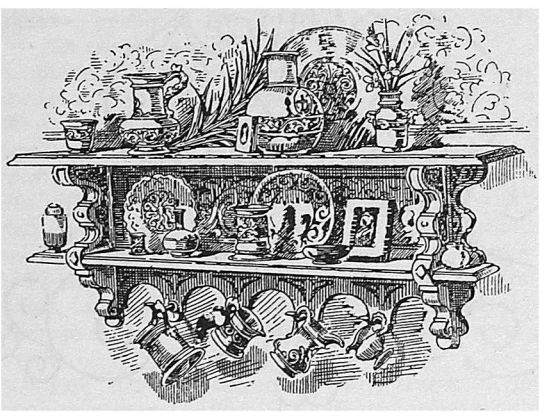


LAYING THE GROUND.

designs classed among the best. That would profit at the same time the manufacturer and the artist who now derives no advantage from the unexcelled designs of monumental candelabra or vases commemorative of the Transit of Venus.

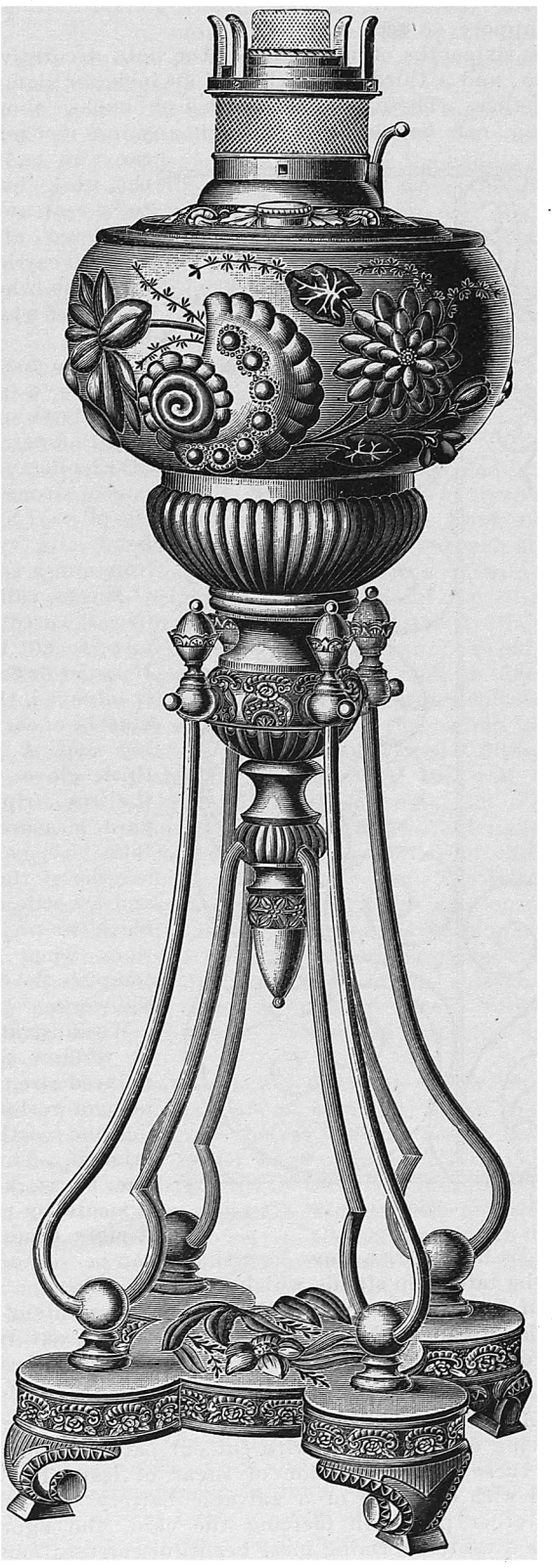
The large vases of Porcelaine Nouvelle lack a little in variety of form and decorative subjects, which are for the most part uniformly composed of stalks and flowering shrubs, embellished either with birds or butterflies, the most pleasing of this kind are those of M. M. Belet, Emile Richard and Lambert, executed with great freedom and strength, giving to the enamels employed their full value. It is not the same with the vases painted by M. Merigot after Mme. Escallier; the composition is harsh, heavy and insignificant, which is somewhat surprising, as the designs and cartoons of Mme. Escallier, displayed at the manufactory and which the painter had only to copy, are marvels of broad and simple execution. The faculty which Porcelaine Nouvelle possesses of receiving and showing the full value of the enamels, has resulted in a slight abuse, to the extent of imitating on the porcelain the enamels painted (en grisaille) in black and white, which was the glory of Limoges in the sixteenth century. The porcelain unfortunately has not, as excipient, the qualities which are necessary to the enameled metal; the laying and baking of the white enamel is not done in the same manner, and the result obtained is far from satisfactory. We will say as much of those imitations (of Limoges grisaille) in stoneware, in white relieved on blue, made by Wedgwood at the end of the last century—imperfect imitations which have no reason for existing, this kind of decoration being little attractive.

Notwithstanding these slight criticisms, the exposition of the manufacture is none the less interesting; it shows that Sèvres in spite of some failures and some passing errors, has not ceased to produce works which hold first rank in porcelain art; works which testify to incessant efforts, and which under the direction of the experienced man and ambitious ceramist who is to-day at the head of the manufactory, give great promise for the future.



OLD MUG AND POT SHELF FROM THE BRUSSELS EXHIBITION.

IN some cases, the application of wax to furniture is preferred to any varnish, as it resists percussion and friction, and its polish can be replaced by rubbing it with a piece of cork, but the luster created is often complained of as dull and not brightening the tint to the same degree as varnish. The following preparation, however, will remove these inconveniences: put two ounces of white and yellow wax over a moderate fire in a very clean vessel, and when it is quite melted add four ounces of the best spirits of turpentine, thus forming a pomade. The oil soon penetrates the pores of the wood, brings up the color, causes the wax to adhere better, and produces a luster equal to that of varnish.



LAMP, BY EDWARD MILLER & CO.

Height, 26 inches. Repousse work. Oxidized silver finish.